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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NORTH KOREA, U.S. FOREIGN POLICY,
U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused March 11 news coverage on the unexpected resignation of Taiwan's National Security Bureau Director-General Henry Tsai Tuesday; on Taiwan's sagging economy; and on the controversy over the assassination attempt against former President Chen Shui-bian and former Vice President Annette Lu on March 19, 2004, one day ahead the presidential election. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the U.S.-South Korea joint military exercise and North Korea's reaction to it. The article listed two options that Washington will likely face but concluded that neither option will meet the U.S. national interests. A separate "China Times" column cited some recent examples and said the United States has entered an era of envoy diplomacy. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" discussed the U.S.-China-Taiwan relations and said "the United States is no longer revered as Taiwan's mentor and protector but a potential obstacle to its joining the normal international community" while "China, Taiwan's traditional adversary, has become the most effective distribution center of the island's exports." End summary.

¶2. North Korea

"Worries Stemming from U.S.-South Korea Military Exercise"

The "International Lookout" column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 150,000] wrote (3/11):

"The annual joint military exercise between the United States and South Korea will last for twelve days, and it remains to be seen what kind of counter-actions North Korea will take during this period. The [same drama of] military exercise being joined by protests is staged every year. Though the scale of this year's [U.S.-South Korea] military exercise is much bigger, and Pyongyang's reaction is much stronger, the chances may not be too high that a war will be triggered [in the region]. The disputes between Washington and Pyongyang are difficult to resolve, and the fundamental reason lies in the fact that the two do not trust each other at all. As a result, every move taken by one side is deemed by the other as an attempt of sabotage and conspiracy. ...

"What is worrisome is: If Pyongyang launches a satellite or missile, will Washington and Seoul really act to intercept it? ... Will [U.S. President Barack] Obama be stuck in a quandary? Should the aforementioned situation [i.e. Washington and Seoul intercept North Korea's missiles and the latter decides to launch counterattack] really happen, the United States must not drag its feet any more with regard to its North Korean policy. Washington has only two options: the first is to adopt military means to deal a heavy blow to North Korea, and the second is to give in and acknowledge that North Korea is a nuclear country. But neither option will meet the U.S. national interests, and both will be akin to a nightmare for South Korea. ..."

¶3. U.S. Foreign Policy

"The United States Entering an Era of Envoy Diplomacy"

Columnist Lin Po-wen noted in his column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 150,000] (3/11):

"... Some pundits believe that appointing special diplomatic envoys will, instead, undermine the authority of the Secretary of State, but such concerns may be totally groundless. Both [President] Obama and [Secretary of State] Clinton are very powerful supervisors, and they will certainly be able to 'control' those special envoys. ... Now [the United States] has entered an era of [appointing] diplomatic envoys; the Secretary of State will spend most of her time mapping out strategic plans at headquarters in Foggy Bottom in Washington D.C., while issues of complexity and sensitivity that are essential to U.S. security will be taken care of by the special envoys. ... Clinton hopes to integrate 'soft power' and exercise 'smart power' in her promotion of the new diplomacy of the United States. But the diplomatic situation she is facing is likely to be the most dangerous and steepest one. Clinton's future may be full of hardships!"

4. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

"Waiting for a Better World"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/10):

"The world's economy has gone down fast in unexpected ways, but its leader the United States does not yet have a grasp of the cause and means to stop it. ... In less than a year, the world is turned upside down. And there is no indication of the end of the tunnel.

U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Taiwan, the sixth biggest economy in Asia, has been hit hard by the global financial crisis, with record falls in its key export sector and rising unemployment. And the United States is no longer revered as Taiwan's mentor and protector but a potential obstacle to its joining the normal international community. On the other hand, China, Taiwan's traditional adversary, has become the most effective distribution center of the island's exports. The U.S., the biggest buyer of Taiwan's products, is blamed for doing too little to expand Taiwan's diplomatic breathing space but a lot to restrict its maneuvering in the international community. One case in point: the U.S. so far still has shown no interest in signing an FTA with Taiwan. (Taiwan has signed FTAs with five of its 23 diplomatic allies - El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Guatemala and Nicaragua.)

"Probably Washington foresaw the inevitability of Taiwan's becoming part of China some day. But this stance deviates from the traditional U.S. Taiwan policy, which has been guided by the strategy of separating democratic Taiwan from communist China. ... Being among the freest on earth, Taiwan's 23 million people will never sacrifice their freedom for anything else. They are looking forward to a better new world."

YOUNG